



Childhood Connections

December 9, 2025

NEWS

First Public School Program to Earn “Exhibiting High Quality” Designation



Congratulations to the Branson Public Schools' Cedar Ridge Primary Pre-K who is recognized as the first public school early childhood program to achieve the designation of Exhibiting High Quality in the Quality Assurance Report (QAR)!

The QAR recognizes unique aspects of quality in early learning and education programs throughout the State of Missouri. Programs Exhibiting High Quality have achieved a minimum of four indicators in Operational Practices and four indicators in Responsive Practices in addition to providing quality teacher-child interactions.

This quality recognition is a clear vision for what each child in Missouri should experience in early care and education programs regardless of age or setting.

If you would like to join the QAR program, please visit [the QAR web page](#) for more information.

National Home Visitor Nominations

Nominations for five **National Home Visitor of the Year** (NHVW), opened on November 5, 2025 (after the webinar) and will close on **January 9**,



2026. Applications received after that date or incomplete applications will not be considered.

The focus of NHVW is to lift up the tremendous work of home visitors everywhere. Home visitors walk alongside families at times of joy and heartbreak and they do so with grace, compassion and respect. What better way to honor someone on your team than with a national nomination for their work!

[The nomination form can be found here.](#)

Funding Opportunity – Innovation Grant to Expand a Child Care Program



The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Childhood is excited to announce applications for the 2025-2026 Innovation Grant to Expand a Child Care Program are now open.

This grant helps licensed and license-exempt child care providers expand their programs in partnership with local businesses or community organizations to meet the growing need for quality child care across Missouri. Eligible applicants with an established partnership can receive up to \$625,000 in matching funds to cover expansion expenses, such as equipment, minor remodeling, and workforce incentives.

Applications will remain open until **February 28, 2026**. For more information, please see [the Innovation Grants web page](#).

Missouri's Parent Education Program



[The National Home Visiting Resource Center has released the 2025 Yearbook.](#) For the first time Missouri Curriculum Partners are included in the yearbook as an Emerging Model. This provides the field with a more inclusive picture of Missouri's home visiting landscape.

To access Missouri Parents as Teachers Curriculum Partner Programs, click Model Profiles located on the left side of the page then use the drop-down option under Select a Model Profile to find Missouri. The data for Missouri Affiliate programs are included in the Parents as Teachers drop-down option.

Congratulations to all our programs across the state for representing home visiting in Missouri at the

national level.

Update from Child Care Subsidy on Transition to New Payment Method



Following the *Pay in Advance* webinar held on November 10, 2025, the Office of Childhood (OOC) has received valuable feedback and concerns from stakeholders, particularly regarding prospective payments and the potential for overpayments. In addition, OOC has recently gathered insights from other states that have implemented prospective payment models. This input has highlighted the need for additional time to further explore and address these concerns.

As a result, OOC has postponed the first authorization-based payment for the Beta group to allow for continued feedback, testing, and review throughout December 2025. In addition, the previously announced tentative target date for statewide implementation has also been delayed.

OOC remains committed to a successful statewide rollout of the new payment method for the Child Care Subsidy program and will share an updated implementation timeline as soon as possible.

Immunization Status Report



The annual Child Care/Preschool Immunization Status Report is due by January 15. This is a requirement, as outlined in the Day Care Immunization Rule, 10 CSR 20-28.040.

[More information can be found here.](#)

[Read Frequently Asked Questions from the Bureau of Immunizations here.](#)

MOPD Monthly Tip

Each professional in the MOPD system has one unique MOPD ID that stays with them throughout their career. To make sure you always have access to your account, we recommend using a personal email address rather than a work email when signing up. If you ever need to update your email, please reach out to MOPD for help, don't create a new account with a different email.

Your MOPD account is just for you. Please don't share your login details with anyone else.

This helps protect your information and follows the MOPD Data Privacy and User Responsibility Agreements that everyone agrees to when using the system.

Questions? Contact MOPD@dese.mo.gov

Job Vacancies



The OOC is hiring and we would love to have you join our team! Click [this link](#) to see open positions.

Conferences

Conference on the Young Years 2026



Get ready to Ignite Curiosity & Inspire Possibilities at the annual Conference on the Young Years (CYY)! OOC is pleased to announce that registration for the 2026 Conference on the Young Years opens **is open**.

CYY will be **March 5-7, 2026**, at Tan-Tar-A Conference Center. A wonderful lineup of keynote and breakout presenters are scheduled, equaling over 130 sessions to choose from. The Missouri Association for the Education of Young Children will also be hosting its annual gala at CYY.

To register, [visit the CYY webpage](#) and expand the Registration accordion. We hope to see you at CYY in March!

Spotlight on Success

Parent Education in Northeast Vernon Co. R-I School and El Dorado Springs R-II School



What began as a simple shared screening partnership between the Northeast Vernon Co. R-I and El Dorado Springs R-II School Districts has grown into a powerful example of how collaboration, communication, and shared vision can expand access to high-quality Parent Education services across rural Missouri.

[Read more about this collaborative effort here.](#)

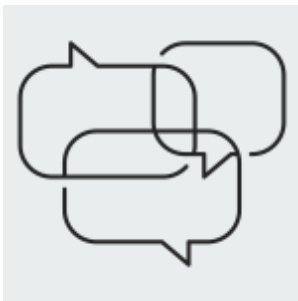
Connecting Families to Support Through Missouri Family Resources



Community Leaders (CLs) are local connections that help bridge the OOC and local resources. CLs work with tools like the Missouri Family Resources (MFR) app to help families and agencies meet their needs.

[Read about one CL sharing their experience with MFR and how it might help your community.](#)

We Want To Know



Share your stories with the Office of Childhood!

[Submit news and updates about Missouri Early Care and Education!](#)

Or email OOCOutreach@dese.mo.gov.

Miss Something?

[Visit the OOC webpage to find previous editions of Childhood Connections.](#)

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, or any other basis prohibited by statute in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Director of Civil Rights Compliance and MOA Coordinator (Title VI/Title VII/Title IX/504/ADA/ADAAA/Age Act/GINA/USDA Title VI), 7th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-522-1775 or TTY 800-735-2966; fax number 573-522-4883; email civilrights@dese.mo.gov.

DESE Office of Childhood | 205 Jefferson Street - 1st Floor | Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Report Spam](#)